1997 LOWER COOK INLET FINFISH STAFF MEETING

By

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INTRODUCTION

On February 13 and 14, 1997, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) staff met in Homer to discuss Lower Cook Inlet (LCI) salmon and herring research and management issues. Regional Commercial Fisheries Management and Development (CFMD) and Sport Fish (SF) Division staff both attended, as did Homer area CFMD and SF staff (Table 1). Agenda topics covered a variety of subjects for which individual Annual Management Reports (AMR) and Regional Information Reports (RIR) can provide additional information for the interested reader. This report intends only to document and summarize the discussions and decisions of the meeting.

This report was formatted to approximate the chronological order in which discussions took place. However, I grouped temporally separated but similar topics to provide organizational flow. Several agenda topics were reorganized to accommodate staff availability. For these reasons, readers should refer to the Table of Contents of this report as the revised agenda. Action items are documented in Table 2. Because over 100 pages of handouts were distributed at the meeting and handout data should be available in reports or from attendees, I have not included the handouts as appendices to this report. Instead, I have listed the handouts in Table 3 so the reader can readily identify handouts cited in the text. Please contact Ted Otis if you have misplaced a pertinent handout and would like another copy. James Brady chaired the meeting and Ted Otis was the recorder.

AGENDA CHANGES

Wes Bucher reported that Don McKay (Habitat Div.) would not be attending the meeting. The Department of Natural Resources recently announced that Kachemak Bay would be closed to mariculture permit applications in 1997. Thus, that agenda topic was deleted and McKay elected not to attend the meeting. John Hilsinger added an administrative item.

REVIEW OF 1996 ACTION ITEMS

Brady called for a review of the 1996 staff meeting action items (see Hammarstrom 1996 for description of original action items):

Item 1: Ellen Simpson, Jim Seeb, Wes Bucher, and others met twice with Port Graham and the Chugach Regional Resources Corporation (i.e. Dave Daisy; CRRC) re: escapement and brood stock collection for sockeyes at English Bay Lakes; Seeb's recommendations for an egg take were followed.

Item 2: Nick Dudiak and Ellen Simpson have maintained a continuing dialogue with Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) regarding 1996 hatchery Annual Management Plans; Dudiak is waiting to see the first draft for Tutka, Simpson has drafts for Trail Lakes and Eklutna.

Item 3: Homer finfish project leaders/supervisors compiled a "staff summary" list of all personnel they supervise, including job function, project name and description, funding, and other pertinent information. This list was submitted to the regional staff.

Item 4: Ellen Simpson arranged a meeting between appropriate representatives of CIAA, LCI staff, and regional staff, to coincide with the Upper Cook Inlet staff meeting in Soldotna on March 11-12, in order to start a dialogue regarding evaluations of LCI salmon enhancement projects, with specific emphasis on marking programs.

Item 5: Lee Hammarstrom worked with Ron Stanek (Subsistence Div.) to develop a an informational handout and voluntary call-in program to tally salmon catches in the new Seldovia subsistence gillnet fishery. Hammarstrom confirmed the handout was successful, while only two calls were received during the early season and one during the late season, suggesting more public education was needed.

Item 6: Lee Hammarstrom developed a map of Seldovia Bay showing areas open to subsistence gillnet fishing.

Item 7: Regional staff (Hilsinger, Brady) were to accompany Homer area staff (Bucher, Dudiak, Hammarstrom) to Seldovia to erect closed waters markers near Seldovia Slough prior to April 1; however, it was determined that the markers were unnecessary .

Item 8: Linda Brannian arranged funding for next fiscal year's monthly Homer WAN charges but was unable to get reimbursement for pre-paid WAN charges the Homer office did not use due to a delay in its connection to the WAN.

Item 9: Homer finfish management staff developed a draft form for field season announcements, incorporating a reference to specific E.O. numbers and including a place for signature of the composing biologist.

Item 10: James Brady informed Paul Desjardin that the Department will not charge FWP officers for berthing aboard the R/V PANDALUS while they are performing fishery enforcement work.

Item 11: Marnee Beverage was appointed the new Office Manager.

Item 12: James Brady increased the program receipt authority for Kamishak Bay herring test fishing from $15.0K to $30.0K.

The general consensus was that staff accomplished their 1996 action items.

SALMON MANAGEMENT TOPICS

Pre-Audits

Brady thanked area staff for getting their pre-audits in on time. Preliminary review indicated Region II will be $49K in the red; however, revenues coming in from vessel charters should cover the deficit. Brady also noted some costs that were not in the pre-audit, such as Charlie Trowbridge's move to Homer, and for 3 FB II positions being filled in the region. A "wish list" was compiled to account for any leftover funds. High on the Homer list was a new server to replace the outdated "plant-holder" we adopted from Anchorage. Homer staff also placed a high priority on the purchase of a remote video system to enumerate sockeye escapement into Mikfik Creek, and on a faster computer for Otis to facilitate running of the herring forecast program. Brady said regional staff will prioritize these needs and review the budget to determine which items can be purchased.

Brady distributed FY98 requests (Handout 1) and asked staff to review them and get back to him with any problems. Brady noted the herring testfish program remained status quo and that May samples would be collected again this year as long as the test fishery was successful. There was some discussion of the difficulties experienced during test fishery effort in past years. Brady stressed that the test fishery has been a learn-as-you-go program and we are refining the procedures to assure its efficient implementation.

1997 Salmon Outlook

Bucher led a discussion on the outlook for the 1997 salmon season (Handout 2). LCI sockeye fisheries rely on hatchery production and only Kirschner Lake was stocked in 1994 due to an IHN epizootic in the hatchery. Consequently, low returns are expected for LCI sockeyes in 1997, except perhaps for the early Resurrection Bay fishery. Sockeye returns to Grouse Lake are expected to be good, however, similarly optimistic forecasts prior to the 1996 season did not materialize; Kirschner should see about 30,000 sockeyes returning, and English Bay should have a small harvestable surplus. Cost-recovery will occur at both Grouse Creek and English Bay River.

Being an odd year, more wild and hatchery pink salmon returns are expected for LCI waters in 1997. Tutka hatchery is expecting 2.5 million fish and will undoubtedly require all of them for cost-recovery. Their Board has decided to close the facility on July 15,(prior to egg take) if it appears they will not recover the $400,000 they require to cover last year's shortfall ($100,000) and this year's operating costs.

Port Dick and Bruin Bay natural returns are forecasted to be very strong. Although there is likely to be a large harvestable surplus returning to both streams, current market prices suggest there will be little or no effort to harvest those fish. Port Graham is expecting 65,000-200,000 pinks and may have a set gill-net fishery if brood stock and cost-recovery goals are met.

Bucher concluded the discussion by suggesting that the 1997 salmon season in LCI was likely to be very quiet. Brady asked Bucher when the Salmon Management Report comes out. Bucher responded that May 1 was the usual date, but that the information had already been verbally

presented to the Cook Inlet Seiners Association (CISA) on December 7. Brady suggested that it would be a good idea for LCI staff to forward salmon forecast information to the regional office so their staff could disseminate it to the interested public. T. Otis volunteered to put the necessary information together and send it to Brady.

Brannian asked Bucher about commercial harvest of Mikfik sockeyes and McNeil chums. Bucher responded that virtually no chum salmon had been harvested in the McNeil subdistrict since 1989. Bucher confirmed that Mikfik has supported a small commercial fishery in past years, but that little or no effort is expected there in 1997.

Review of Enhancement Field Projects

Nick Dudiak led this discussion which included a slide presentation and several handouts (Handouts 3-6, and 8-11). Given Dudiak's pending retirement, this would be his last presentation of LCI enhancement projects. Dudiak developed his presentation to emphasize his perspective on these projects in hopes that those following him could maintain some continuity.

Hatchery salmon releases in LCI have consistently increased from 1978-1996. Production at the Tutka facility is largely responsible for this. Dudiak asked research staff to monitor the survival from hatchery releases, noting that he had noticed an inverse relationship between releases and survival. He warned against increasing releases further without some survival/carrying capacity impact studies.

Chenik Lake

A natural return of sockeye salmon in Chenik Lake peaked at 150,000 fish in 1932 before declining to about 40 fish in 1978 when enhancement began. Stocking brought production back up to about 173,000 fish in the late 1980's, however, adult returns have suffered in recent years. Dudiak believes significant predation on stocked fry by resident lake trout may be occurring. However, he also acknowledges that overzealous stocking efforts (2.5 million fry) in the past 3 years may be partly responsible for the current poor returns (1,000-3,000 adults). Significant levels of IHN were noted in smolts during 1990-1993, which probably led to poor survival. Dudiak believes escapement was too high in the early 1980's and that in conjunction with Chenik Lake's slow recharge rate (4.5 year water residency), this may have facilitated IHN transmission. Dudiak has speculated that the same thing could have caused the late 1930's crash.

Dudiak outlined a new Chenik Lake stocking concept which included stocking more fry to compensate for high predation by lake trout (Handout 3). Theoretically, that would help to overcome the current problems of low smolt survival and adult returns. Hilsinger suggested that the Chenik run had made small gains in the past few years and that it may return on its own. Dudiak responded that predation by resident lake trout would probably prevent that. Bechtol asked if we had any size at age information from the 1930's which we could compare to recent size data; Bechtol surmised that the Chenik Creek waterfalls caused by the 1964 earthquake may select for smaller fish more capable of ascending the falls.

Hilsinger asked what Chenik funding had been discontinued. Dudiak responded that $6,000 was lost from the Limnology budget and that most seiners did not want to spend any more money on

the project. Consequently, the smolt camp would not be in operation for 1997, however the adult weir will be installed to enumerate the return. Because the Chenik eggs were already spawned and reared at the Eklutna Hatchery, Dudiak hoped to be able to stock the lake in 1997 despite CISA's decision to spend no more money on that project.

Leisure/Hazel Lakes

Dudiak recounted that fertilization of Leisure Lake began in 1984 and showed a graph illustrating the positive correlation fertilization had with production. After summarizing recent years' results, discussion focused on neighboring Hazel Lake. Dudiak described how Hazel Lake is now weired off to prevent undesired escapement and potential IHN transmission by adults, however, he noted that natural velocity barriers precluded most fish from reaching lake anyhow.

Delight/Desire Lakes

Dudiak reviewed the status of an EVOS project proposal, submitted by CISA, to investigate the productivity of, and possibly enhance, Delight/Desire Lakes. While initially receiving a favorable review, the proposal did generate some concerns which had to be addressed by Dudiak and Dickson. Discussion of those concerns at Thursday's meeting was rendered obsolete by Friday's announcement that EVOS decided to fund the project. Gary Kyle (Limnology; Soldotna) will likely be the principal investigator. Also, Bill Hauser (Habitat Div.; Anchorage) indicated to Bucher that EVOS funded the project on two conditions: 1). The project would be administered in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division (USGS-BRD); and 2). Port Graham Native Corporation should be peripherally involved with the project.

Port Dick

Dudiak presented slides illustrating the methods and successes of the Port Dick spawning channel restoration project, another EVOS funded study. To summarize, two pink and chum spawning channels tributary to Port Dick Creek were rendered unproductive by the 1964 earthquake. Ground upheaval raised the stream bed enough so stream flow was subterranean during winter months, killing any eggs that were deposited during spawning. A heavy construction crew removed gravel and lowered the stream bed enough so it would not dewater during low winter flows. Planting eyed eggs in the stream was not necessary as adult pink and chum readily recolonized the streams naturally. This spring, Development staff plan to enumerate outmigrating smolts and determine their condition factor to evaluate their incubation habitat. This evaluation will continue for three years and then be followed by basic monitoring.

Hilsinger asked what the proportional increase in spawning habitat for Port Dick Creek was as a result of this project. Dudiak estimated it may be as high as 25% if you factor in the potentially increased survival rate for these spawning channels. Hammarstrom asked how much spawning area was created by the project. Dudiak estimated a total of 1300 square meters was added (800 in primary channel, 500 in secondary channel). Hilsinger asked how many fish spawned in the restored channels. Dudiak estimated 300 chum and 572 pink salmon spawned there. Brannian recommended that we continue to include Alaska State Parks on the report distribution list for projects occurring in the Park. Hilsinger asked Dudiak if funding existed for the fertilization and limnological monitoring of Leisure, Hazel, and Kirschner Lakes. Dudiak confirmed that it did.

Brannian asked about the status of detailed study plans which are required for EVOS projects. Dudiak responded that Dickson will handle that.

Staff Changes

Hilsinger led a discussion on staff changes and restructuring of responsibilities pending anticipated retirements. Dennis Haanpaa will be retiring on May 1 and his position will not be refilled. Part of those salary savings (5 months) will go into balancing the FY97 budget, the rest will go into FY98 field projects that were short funded. The loss of Dennis' position necessitated delegating his responsibilities amongst existing regional staff, which led to a few changes. Brannian will no longer head Central Region's biometrics staff, but will become an FB IV and will take over Brady's responsibilities as the Regional Management Biologist for UCI and LCI salmon, herring, groundfish, and shellfish. Bue will take over supervision of Central Region biometrics staff. Brady will shift his responsibilities to Bristol Bay, Fried retains his research supervision (including ongoing oil spill studies), and Hilsinger will add vessel supervision to his existing responsibilities. Hilsinger was very optimistic that this reorganization would work out well, although it may mean area staff will have less contact with regional staff due to their increased responsibilities. Hilsinger reiterated that the impetus for the reorganization was to assure the region did not lose 3 vacant FB II positions. He said the region was very conscious of the turnover linked to pending retirements and they wanted assistant area positions filled to smooth the transitions that are likely to occur. FB II duties and responsibilities will be reviewed in the near future to be sure those individuals are being groomed for the responsibilities they may take on as positions are moved around.

Bucher asked about FB I positions and how they might be used to recruit new personnel to the system. Hilsinger responded that it often cost the Department more for a couple of 4 month FB I positions than it does for a permanent FB II due to the FB I overtime eligibility. Brady introduced the restructuring aspects of hiring which will occur in the next year or two. Registers will no longer be used. Instead, individuals interested in available positions will simply apply to the hiring officer who will make the decision on who is hired. This should make it easier for anyone to apply for vacant positions and thereby attract the highest quality candidates for FB II positions. Brady expressed his opinion that this may be the best way to consistently assure that quality personnel are recruited into the system.

When asked about funding stability, Hilsinger said he was not optimistic about more money coming in to fund projects unless Senate Bill 40 was passed. Hilsinger said CFMD budgets are back at 1977 levels (adjusted for inflation) and that the region tried to consider this in the reorganization.

Sportfish

Hepler led a discussion concerning Sport Fish's (SF) role in reorganization of the Homer area office. Hepler first described SF's history in Homer. Dudiak's responsibilities have been split between SF and Development for several years. Meyer's position was moved from Anchorage to Homer in 1991 to increase SF presence in Homer. Meyer's position will be upgraded to an FB III and he will gain some responsibility supervising groundfish/rockfish work in Seward. SF wanted to fill the void that will be created with Dudiak's upcoming retirement. They evaluated their positions around the state to see where they could reorganize and decided to upgrade Szarzi to an

FB III and move her from Glennallen to Homer where she will become the Area Sportfish Biologist. As part of this reorganization, LCI SF responsibilities will now include everything south of Kasilof. Szarzi will manage recreational shellfish and finfish and Meyer will manage groundfish. Brady asked about local SF presence in Seward. Hepler responded that SF seasonally maintains 1-2 rooms in City Hall for catch samplers and Mike Bethe's (SF, Anchorage) crew who will begin a black rockfish tagging study this summer.

Homer Safety Officer

Staff discussed the Homer Safety Officer position and how Cowan voluntarily assumed that responsibility. Cowan initiated an OSHA inspection and wrote a safety manual to address pertinent safety issues. Cowan's initiative has greatly benefited the Homer office, but he has only been able to do this because he has consistently been employed 6-8 months a year. In FY98 Cowan is only assured of 2 months of employment. Dudiak requested that Homer staff try to coordinate existing projects to provide Cowan with more work, thus enabling him to continue his responsibilities as the area safety officer. One possibility that was suggested was to increase the safety officer's responsibilities to region wide. There was some verbal support for this, Hilsinger stressed that although we needed to improve on our safety procedures in the region there is no money for a dedicated position. Brady voiced optimism that existing projects could keep Cowan busy for 6-8 months each year if staff endeavored to coordinate projects and fill short-term needs with Cowan.

In a related topic, Hepler requested that area CFMD staff review their projects and seasonal staff needs so SF could determine how many seasonals they would have to hire to fill in for their own growing needs. Brady emphasized that we should give preference to existing seasonal staff for any new work. Hilsinger stressed we will not keep people on the payroll just because funds are available, but we need to have individuals aligned with specific project objectives. Attendees outlined their seasonal staff needs by project (Table 3). Handouts 7 and 8 summarize CFMD project scheduling and staffing needs for 1997.

PNP Project/Facility Review

Simpson led a discussion on private non-profit hatchery operations (Handout 12). She indicated that drafts hatchery Annual Management Plans (AMP's) were being reviewed by ADF&G. Although some revisions are necessary (e.g. including more information on cost-recovery and staffing), the reports are progressing well. Hepler indicated he would like to assure that all Eklutna hatchery coho were coded wire tagged (CWT). Hepler also inquired if Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) sockeyes were being CW tagged. Simpson indicated the fish were being otolith marked, but not CW tagged. When asked if returns are being screened for marked fish Simpson replied no. Brannian suggested passage of SB-40 may fund fish sampling.

Port Graham Hatchery

Considerable discussion centered around Port Graham hatchery (PGH) operations. PGH has had a serious problem with sockeye survival for the past 3 years (nearly 100% mortality). Simpson suggested the problem was a lack of proper training, as well as a lack of understanding for what it takes to culture fish. Last month when she, Bucher, Jim Seeb (Genetics, Anchorage), and Dudiak visited the hatchery, they noticed that everyone left at 1700 h and no one monitored the eggs or fry during the night. Dudiak also pointed out air entrainment problems to the hatchery staff. During a

teleconference the Department suggested if Cook Inlet Regional Corporation (CIRC) didn't address issues like personnel training and culture techniques, some action would be taken. One drastic and politically difficult option would be to recommend to the Regional Planning Team (RPT) that Port Graham's hatchery permit be revoked.

Hilsinger asked about the coho program at Port Graham. Simpson responded that PGH had failed to take eggs during the first year of their 5-year program. The second year, fry experienced problems with BKD. Simpson also said she doubted PGH has the expertise to conduct the salt water releases proposed for Johnson Slough. Despite PGH exhibiting poor fish culture practices, Bucher believes PGH has helped to impress upon local residents the fragility of salmon resources, and how difficult it is to maintain strong, healthy returns. He recounted how village elders elected to close the new road to keep residents from "over harvesting" adult cohos when they were worried about their coho resource. Bucher commented that maybe the best thing the village could do was hire a professional fish culturist to help run the hatchery.

Tutka Hatchery

Bucher reiterated the $400,000 cost-recovery revenue goal necessary to keep the hatchery in operation beyond July 15. The peak of the pink run typically occurs around 10-13 July, so the hatchery should have a good projection of whether they can reach their goal. Bucher indicated CISA proposed to extend the "no-fishing" boundary to assure that the common property fishery did not intercept hatchery fish.

Trail Lakes

When the Crooked Creek facility closed, the Tustumena project was transferred to Trail Lakes Hatchery (TLH). Simpson indicated the TLH AMP was currently being reviewed by ADF&G and was also forwarded to CIAA for their input.

Resurrection Bay

Bucher recounted a conversation he'd had with Jeff Hetrick (CIAA) regarding the release of coho and sockeye salmon in Spring Creek (Resurrection Bay). Hetrick also introduced the idea of releasing sockeyes in Bear Creek since the Grouse Lake project had not begun very successfully. Hetrick wanted to know what Bucher thought of these options. Bucher indicated to Hetrick that he had concerns related to the timing of the common property and cost-recovery fisheries. Hilsinger reminded everyone that the decision to stock Grouse Lake instead of other systems was made years ago and was based on run-timing concerns. There was more discussion of the history of the decision to go with Grouse Lake. Brannian added that the only thing that has changed now is they found they're having trouble holding a weir in Grouse Creek which complicates cost-recovery efforts since they cannot implement cost-recovery in the marine environment. Someone mentioned that Paul Ruesch and Ken Tarbox (CFMD, Soldotna) did not want to see Bear Lake become a genetic dumping ground. Hilsinger suggested it was a bit premature to propose changing sites based on a single year's difficulties, but conceded that he did not think they should be held to that site forever if problems persist. Hilsinger summarized Bucher's position- basically there would be no problem with CIAA switching sites as long as they complied with the Bear Lake Management Plan and they set a specific date to switch from the common property fishery to cost-recovery. Hammarstrom described the current timing of the common property fishery (May 15-July 15) and

suggested that fishermen would be very upset if future cost-recovery efforts cut into their fishery. Brady wanted to verify that CIAA was releasing their fish above the weir site so they'd be assured of returning that high. Fried concurred and recounted problems in Eshamy Bay where returning adults just milled around the bay where they'd been held in netpens.

Hilsinger asked how many coho were stocked in Bear Lake last year. Dudiak indicated 450,000 coho (150,000 of them as smolts) were stocked. Bucher described how storms had dropped trees across the stream last year, slowing returning coho enough so that they were blushed and unmarketable by the time they reached the weir where cost recovery took place. Consequently, they gave a lot of fish away last year without selling them.

Dudiak mentioned that he and Bucher had talked to Hetrick about stocking surplus TLH coho in Caribou Lake. Last year Hetrick thought he had surplus coho that could be used for that purpose but later found that he did not. However, he indicated that they could plan to have a surplus in the future if someone would pay for it. Hilsinger reiterated his opposition to opportunistically stocking random surplus fish and suggested a project proposal should be written if we intend to stock Caribou Lake. He asked if Bucher would be willing to pay for such a project. Bucher responded that we'd first need to resolve some other issues, but, if we could protect natural Fox River stocks then it would be a good investment. One of the main issues to resolve would be with SF Division, who is now the state's hatchery division. They would need to sign off on such a proposal before we consider pushing the project. Szarzi asked about the ability to CWT any cohos to be released in Caribou Lake. Dudiak thought that CIAA did have CWT equipment, but that CW tagging fish would add a considerable amount to the project's cost. Brannian said she would check with Doug McBride (SF) to be sure they were CW tagging any stocked cohos which might contribute to the PU fishery. Then we can determine the contribution of Fox River stocks to the PU fishery (evaluate tagged/untagged ratio). Dudiak mentioned that we had some tag information for Homer Spit fish, indicating that 7-10% of the PU harvest last year (1 week opening) was composed of Spit fish. Dudiak also indicated there may be some Kenai River cohos mixed in with our fish off the Bluff. Brannian concluded that we should not stock any fish in Caribou Lake that were not CW tagged.

PNP Liaison

Dudiak indicated he has been working with the PNP hatcheries over the years trying to help with training (reading scales, CWT, etc.). Dudiak suggested that this could be another thing added to Bucher's responsibilities when Dudiak retires. Bucher indicated he did not have the fish culture experience necessary to fulfill that duty. Brady suggested that with Bucher and Brannian sitting on the RPT, there would be good opportunity for input there, but it would be nice to be able to bring Dan Moore in to fill the fish culture expertise void. Dudiak mentioned that Dickson had an excellent understanding of fish culture practices. Simpson asked if Terry Ellison's position would be refilled following his retirement. Hilsinger said he thought the Dept. needed someone else with fish culture experience to advise ADF&G staff on PNP matters (review AMP's, etc.). He envisioned it being a CFMD position. Brannian agreed that since CFMD plan and permit the PNP's, which produce the most fish, CFMD should retain some fish culture expertise. Hilsinger suggested he'd like to see a fish pathologist/culturist do project reviews at PNP's around the state each year. This may reduce disease-related mortality problems. Hilsinger indicated he would draft

a memo to Bob Clasby (Director, CFMD) to stress these points, and recommend that the division retain some fish culture and pathology expertise.

Simpson spoke briefly about personnel changes at CIAA. Tom Mears has retired and Gary Fandrei will take over as executive director; Tom Walker will be reclassified as Special Projects Manager.

SALMON RESEARCH TOPICS

Program Review

Mikfik Creek. Video

Otis discussed the remote video escapement project that he and Bucher would like to implement on Mikfik Creek in 1997 (Handout 13). A remote camera deployed over the stream will record images of salmon escapement onto a time-lapse VCR housed in a weather/bear proof strong box. The VCR will be driven by four 12V batteries which will be charged by five 4.3 amp/hr solar panels. Recording a single image every 1.9 seconds, a standard 120 minute VHS tape will last for 9 days (recording 20 hours/day). The system offers dramatic improvements in escapement monitoring over aerial survey indices because it provides near-census quality escapement data. If the system proved technically feasible and field durable at Mikfik Creek, it could have broad application across the state.

Equipment costs to implement the project would run around $10,300 including $4,200 for a high resolution color camera capable of operating underwater at depths to 1,000 meters. The underwater camera could be used for video escapement projects during the summer and for gear catchability estimates during trawl and scallop dredge surveys during the rest of the year. Regional staff indicated they had the project on their "wish list" but did not yet know whether it would be funded. They anticipated finalizing the pre-audit in the next 2 weeks (by the time of writing, it was determined funds were not available for the video escapement study).

Brannian asked whether there was a Project Operational Plan (POP) for the study. Otis said he would write one as soon as they had some indication that the project would be funded. Hilsinger asked if it might be possible to use camera at a second system once the Mikfik run was over. Otis and Bucher suggested it could be, though there may be some temporal overlap depending on which other run we wanted to monitor. Hilsinger wondered if Wildlife Conservation (WC) Division might be able to contribute some money to the project since it would likely benefit the bear sanctuary. Bucher wondered whether the camera could then be used elsewhere if WC funded its purchase.

Commissioner's memo

Hilsinger summarized the history behind a memo sent by the Commissioner which encouraged WC and CFMD to work together on McNeil River fish/bear issues. There was some confusion as to the impetus for the memo given all the recent cooperation between the divisions on this issue. Hilsinger concluded that the memo had been through the "e-mail time-warp", and everyone was turning it into something that it was not. He felt confident that we have been making good progress

on this front and indicated that John Westlund (WC) concurred. Brady said he would compile all recent documents relating to WC/CFMD cooperative research efforts at McNeil and forward them with a cover letter (written by Westlund?) to the commissioner's office to bring them up to speed. He indicated he would simultaneously plug for some special funding for the video escapement project.

McNeil River studies

Otis summarized CFMD research activities that took place at McNeil River in 1996. He reported that almost 120 chum salmon were tagged with colored Petersen disc tags as they entered the river. This was done in an effort to determine the stream-life of McNeil River chums. WC staff at the sanctuary were to watch for tagged fish and record the dates their stream-life ended. Unfortunately, only one tagged fish was seen by WC staff, partly due to their inability to spend a lot of time at recovery efforts given their other duties. It was apparent that more fish would need to be tagged and considerably more effort put into the recovery aspect in order to assure success in the future. Thus, we still have little information on the stream-life of chum salmon at McNeil River; however, we do have a better understanding of what it will take to collect those data. There was a consensus among the group that it was necessary to establish some seasonal fisheries personnel at McNeil in order to complete meaningful fisheries studies. This has been problematic in the past due to the limited space and strict operating protocol at the sanctuary. Otis indicated progress was being made towards that goal and that WC had indicated they would be able to house two fisheries staff in the tool shed.

Otis reported that CFMD had collected another 50 fish to complete the genetics sample Seeb needed to run gels on McNeil chums. Otis mentioned that CFMD planned to collect genetic samples from chum salmon returning to drainages adjacent to McNeil so Seeb would have the baseline data necessary to evaluate whether or not McNeil fish could be identified from a mixed stock sample. While tagging chums and collecting genetic samples at McNeil River, Otis also collected about 170 AWL samples. In the absence of a commercial fishery, escapement sampling is necessary to collect AWL data. With the McNeil run so depressed and the lagoon such a challenging place to seine, it is difficult to collect adequate AWL samples. Lastly, Otis reconnoitered a suitable location on Mikfik Creek for the video escapement project. A potential site had been identified previously by Bucher; Otis re-evaluated and photographed the site.

Aside from collecting pertinent information, field efforts at McNeil River in 1996 continued to forge a cooperative relationship between WC and CFMD divisions. CFMD established their commitment to addressing fishery issues at McNeil River and WC is beginning to demonstrate the flexibility necessary for CFMD to conduct fisheries research within the sanctuary.

Catch/Escapement Sampling

Bechtol began his overview of LCI salmon sampling by commending T. McNeill for her efforts over the past several years. McNeill actively worked with the processors and fishermen to get pure samples. Bill does not see major changes in our strategy unless we decide to pursue escapement more samples. Bucher mentioned the problems we are having with catch sampling now there is little or no catch from some drainages. He suggested we should pursue escapement samples more aggressively. Otis agreed, and pointed out that escapement sampling would also alleviate

difficulties collecting pure samples from mixed stock catches. Bechtol observed that escapement sampling would add to costs such as logistics and overtime. Hilsinger mentioned that the added seasonal staff for Homer this year might help McNeill to opportunistically grab escapement samples. Several people noted that we could simultaneously collect genetic and escapement AWL samples. This provoked a discussion of the status of the Delight/Desire genetic samples collected and sent to Chris Kondzela at the Auke Bay Lab. T. McNeill volunteered to pursue their status.

Further discussion of escapement sampling yielded the conclusion that LCI AWL sampling strategies should be reviewed and possibly revamped. Bechtol and Otis will work with Bucher and Hammarstrom to develop an efficient and effective strategy that emphasizes priority stocks. Several staff members noted that with recent fishery declines, we are now monitoring stock status more than stock removals and escapement sampling may be more appropriate. Brannian suggested Homer staff also consider the makeup of historical AWL data from LCI when reviewing their strategy.

Research Reorganization

Hilsinger asked how the research reorganization was working out. Bucher indicated he was very happy with the outcome. The relocation of Henry Yuen's old position to Homer has improved communication and work effectiveness between CF management and research. B. was also pleased and conferred that he and Otis have divided their responsibilities based on their backgrounds; Otis leads salmon/herring research and Bechtol leads shellfish/groundfish research.

SPORTFISH TOPICS

Seasonals

Hepler initiated a discussion of SF topics beginning with seasonal staff needs. Hepler wanted to be sure that Balland, Dickson, and Cowan's positions were adequately covered in the reorganization. Considerable discussion ensued speculating on how best to utilize existing staff and to extend their employment periods to cover LCI projects. In some cases, temporal overlaps precluded Cowan and others from working on more than two projects. The general consensus was that project leaders would emphasize the use of current seasonals to fill new positions whenever possible.

Office Space

Szarzi will likely take Dudiak's office when Dudiak retires. Most seasonal positions will not require office space beyond what is currently available, however, there was discussion of adding a work space to Balland's cubicle and making the Vessels cubicle available to seasonals while Vessel staff are sailing. The only long-term position that has no space allocation is the fish ticket data entry FWT III. Brady indicated there was no money available for office renovation and hoped we could cover our needs with existing space.

Equipment/Vehicles

Dudiak outlined his vehicle/equipment inventory (Handout 8) and mentioned that some of it may be available for other projects. Hepler mentioned that they had money in Szarzi's budget to cover a

4WD truck for her. Dudiak stressed the importance of maintaining the boom truck, but warned that DOT could call it back at any time since it is nearly 14 years old. Hilsinger reminded everyone that after 4 years leasing a vehicle you can request a new one from DOT. SF will probably pick up the costs for the boom truck which was previously paid by Dudiak's budgets, however, Bucher recommended that we try to get a reduced rate on the boom truck which currently costs $452/month. Dudiak indicated the 3/4 ton Chevy 2WD pickup was available for Szarzi's use. Hepler emphasized that Dudiak would require 4WD to access the beach for clam surveys and suggested that SF would probably lease a new truck. Bucher suggested he could pick up the 3/4 ton Chevy so CFMD would have 2 vehicles available for the summer. It was decided that Bucher would review Homer CFMD's vehicle needs and coordinate with SF to streamline and economize the Homer vehicle fleet.

Dudiak reviewed the condition and uses for the boats on his inventory, again suggesting that some would be available for use on other projects. Bucher said CFMD has the watercraft they need to accommodate their regular projects, but indicated they may require another boat for the Delight/Desire project. Brady recommended that the three vessels commonly used for Development projects (21' aluminum skiff with 120 HP, 18' Klamath with 60 HP, and 14' aluminum skiff with 35 HP) be transferred to SF and the 17' Whaler go to CFMD for the Delight/Desire project.

Hepler asked how Homer's administrative costs were split between divisions. Beverage said office overhead has historically been split 41/35/12/12 by Comm. Fish, Development, SF and Wildlife respectively. She stated that on July 1, Management and Development will become one budget, so CFMD would pay 76% of office overhead. Hepler indicated SF would pay 6 months of C. Bunker's salary. Brady inquired about the rest of Homer's administrative costs. Beverage indicated she splits office supplies and postage meter costs equitably between divisions. Brady asked if the split would change when Dudiak retires and Szarzi comes on board (adding about 6 man-months to SF staff). Hepler wanted to ensure that SF contributed their fair share. After some discussion, the consensus was that we would maintain status quo and Bucher would confer with SF if it appeared there was an imbalance following Dudiak's retirement.

Regarding other equipment issues, Hammarstrom reminded SF that Dudiak's computer was a 386 so they may want to plan on upgrading when Szarzi comes on board. Bucher indicated Balland had CFMD 486 and Hepler agreed to get another computer to replace Balland's so CFMD could get that 486 back.

Program Summary

Hepler announced that SF was introducing a new harvest permit for hardshell clams this year. It will be similar to last year's PU crab fishery permit (which incidentally will be redesigned for this year). Consequently, he warned, we could expect an increase in permit inquiries at the front desk this year.

Nick Dudiak

Before presenting summaries of LCI Development projects, Dudiak commented on his career long involvement in public information and education. Dudiak emphasized the intangible benefits to th

Department generated by these activities and offered to meet with Szarzi to discuss her interest in continuing some of them. Dudiak's summaries of stocking efforts at Homer Spit, Halibut Cove Lagoon, Seldovia Bay, Caribou Lake, and miscellaneous fisheries was very thorough. Details can be found in Handouts 9, 10, and 11. Handout 11 summarizes 20 years of observations and insight and should provide an excellent vehicle for Szarzi to become acquainted with LCI area fisheries.

Seldovia Subsistence

Hammarstrom summarized a recent request by Seldovia residents to the BOF to admit a late proposal to modify the Seldovia subsistence fishery. Hammarstrom provided some background information on the fishery which began in 1996. The BOF created an early season to avoid harvesting enhanced chinook, and a late season to provide opportunities to harvest other species. Only 42 permits were issued for the early season (April 1-May 20) and four for the late season. Fifty-one chinook and seven sockeyes were harvested in the early fishery and only 13 permitees fished. One permitee fished the late season and landed one sockeye. Hammarstrom read the letter from Fred Elvsaas (President, Seldovia Village Tribe) to John White (Chairman of the BOF) requesting that the board consider extending the early season another 10 days and increasing the area open to subsistence fishing. A lengthy discussion ensued whereby most agreed that these changes would circumvent the board's original intent to reduce the potential for harvesting stocked chinooks and UCI chinook that swing into the mouth of Seldovia Bay. Brady suggested that the late proposal could not be brought before the Board this year because it missed the proposal deadline. He indicated he would contact Laird Jones to confirm this.

Caribou Lake

Following Dudiak's summary of the cessation of the Caribou Lake coho stocking project, discussion centered around the impact the PU gillnet fishery may have on remaining coho stocks. Much of the PU fishery occurs along the north side of the bay, which appears to be the migratory path of native Fox River stocks. Now that no more fish will be returning to Caribou Lake, staff were particularly concerned that native Fox River stocks would take the brunt of the harvest. Several staff questioned whether Fox River stocks could sustain the added pressure. Dudiak estimated the Spit stock could handle up to a 10% contribution to the PU fishery without damaging the Spit sport fishery. He expressed concern that harvest of Spit and Fox River fish would rise above acceptable levels if the PU fishery lasted longer than one week. During recent years while Caribou Lake was being stocked, the 2,500-3,500 fish PU harvest guideline was reached in a week. Without Caribou Lake returns, it would likely take much longer to harvest 2,500-3,500 fish in the PU fishery. There was also some discussion that the Fox Creek dip net fishery (on stocked fish returning to Caribou Lake) was created to harvest any surplus cohos that return to Fox Creek with the added benefit of reducing pressure (poaching) on the natural run of Fox River cohos. Now that Caribou Lake is no longer being stocked, an old problem will probably resurface.

Bucher and Dudiak introduced the option of using surplus Port Graham coho to stock Caribou Lake this year to ease some of the pressure in the future while we consider our alternatives. Hilsinger was opposed to this type of opportunistic stocking. He indicated that a peer reviewed project plan should be approved prior to restocking Caribou Lake. K. Hepler remarked that we had created a classic problem- we built up a fishery on stocked fish and now that we're not stocking any longer, a natural run is going to face increased pressure. He did not believe we should attempt to stock our

way out of this problem and indicated SF had no intention of stocking Caribou Lake. Hepler suggested we should either write an E.O. to decrease or close the PU fishery this year, or go before the Board to change the PU harvest guideline based on the biological concerns we have discussed. Others suggested that since we had not yet been through a year without Caribou Lake returns, we could not evaluate the impact the absence of those fish would have on existing stocks. After more discussion a consensus was reached to sit on this issue for a year to see if our biological concerns materialized, then we could address the problem next year when more information may be available.

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

Computer Programming

Bucher summarized the situation relating to the salmon escapement database and Yuen's old programs to manipulate and summarize those data. When Yuen left he was archiving the escapement data in Rbase and turned the project over to Bucher. After experiencing problems with windows based versions of RBASE, Bucher put it on hold until the Division decided which database software it was going to utilize. Recently, the decision has been made to go with MS Access (at least on a trial basis). Baker will work on converting all the existing archived data into Access. Tim preferred Access over Rbase because Rbase has caused many problems in the past and MS Access is powerful, flexible, and provides excellent support. Baker would like our database to be comparable with Bristol Bay's database structure (at least standardized field names). After the archival conversion is completed, Baker will begin evaluating the compatibility of Yuen's programs with the new database and will make any necessary revisions.

On an unrelated archival note, Bucher recommended that anyone with important data on a 5.5" floppy disks should transfer the information to a 3.5" floppy since most computers don't have 5.5" floppies anymore. Baker warned that floppies have a relatively short lifespan (magnetic decay) and that all important data should be stored on a hard drive as well.

Computer Network/Software Upgrades

Hammarstrom announced that Homer would be moving to the Windows 95 operating system and MS Office 97. Hammarstrom would do the first installations on his machine to work out all the bugs before installing the software on Beverage and Bucher's machines. Brannian asked if Homer was currently using Lotus or Excel for their spreadsheet needs. Hammarstrom responded that Excel was used most of the time except where some of Yuen's programs necessitated using Lotus for compatibility. Because Yuen's programs read column delimited files with a .PRN extension, Bechtol thought it would be fairly straight forward to adjust the Excel output to be readable by Yuen's programs. This raised a discussion as to whether Baker could look into updating Yuen's programs so they would read Excel files. Baker wasn't sure he could get to that before salmon season and was hesitate to try to fix something that wasn't broke. It may be best to get through this season using Lotus whenever necessary and then revise Yuen's programs next winter (if necessary). Baker said he would try to come to Homer this summer when we're using Yuen's programs to make sure we can easily go to Excel spreadsheets and still run the program. Baker volunteered to confer with Brannian and Bue to put together the needs for converting the salmon database to MS

Access and also will explore our data entry system to confirm that the Excel files will be compatible with Yuen's programs.

GIS/MapInfo

Baker indicated he had a complete set of MapInfo maps that he could download onto the Homer. The maps are in layers, one showing coastline, one showing the 3-mile limit, etc. The whole package requires 100 MB of space. Baker is still working on LCI statistical areas, but these should be ready in the near future. Baker also has NOAA charts in electronic form. The statistical areas aren't plugged into these yet and there are some transfer restrictions, but we should be able to share copies within the Department. It was decided that Hammarstrom would provide Baker with the passwords necessary for him to access the Homer Server and download the MapInfo maps.

Homer Server

Hammarstrom recounted the Homer server's illustrious history as a plant holder as the lead in to his plug that the Region fund a new server for the Homer area office. Two servers of this type used at other area offices both crashed. Hammarstrom is convinced Homer is living on borrowed time. Hammarstrom has picked out a solid replacement that will serve Homer's needs into the future. The system will cost $7,000 for the server and $1,000 for the software (Netware ver. 4.11). Brady indicated the request was added to the "wish list" (it was later determined that Homer would get funding for the new server).

NERR Update

Otis summarized Kachemak Bay's status for being added to the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) system. Glenn Seaman (Habitat Div.), organizer for the effort, informed Otis recently that they were close to completing the proposal. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had some concerns with the proposal and Glenn will address them before offering the document for the governor's signature. From there, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), administrators of the NERR program, will review the proposal and make the determination as to whether Kachemak Bay will be admitted. Glenn indicated that the Reserve boundaries would likely be all of the Kachemak Bay and Fox River Critical Habitat Areas and those uplands of Kachemak Bay State Park which drain into Kachemak Bay.

Seward Sea Life

Simpson reviewed recent events relating to the Seward Sea Life Center. Seward recently held a public meeting whereby many sportfishers voiced their disdain for the proposed "line" that would close fishing near the fish ladder. It appears that the project is going forward however, and Simpson predicted that a "line fishery" would likely develop.

Senate Bill 40

Hilsinger summarized Senate Bill 40 (SB-40), sponsored by Rick Halford and known as the Discrete Stock Management (DSM) Bill. The bill directs the BOF to develop a discrete stock management policy and implement the resulting regulations by 2004. The intent is to give the Department direction for setting escapement goals for discrete stocks and implementing programs for stock composition analysis. Funding for the projects necessary to implement the policy potentially would come from garnering a percentage of the raw fish tax and increasing SF license

fees, commercial fishery entry permits, and crew member licenses. One concern Hilsinger had with the bill is that it tells the Board to set some broad policies without giving them any direction. Hilsinger observed that DSM could be defined by different individuals in several different ways. He worries that the bill is nebulous and may not facilitate its intended purpose. However, he agreed that the Department would benefit from improved escapement monitoring and stock composition analysis to mitigate problems stemming from mixed stock fisheries. The main emphasis would be on sockeye, chinook and coho, however, it would not preclude other stocks of concern. He indicated that two DSM projects had been identified for LCI as part of the process to estimate the fiscal note necessary to implement SB-40. The first project would be allocated $50,000 per year to monitor escapement of declining McNeil River chum stocks. The second would receive $150,000 per year to implement a juvenile tagging study on West Side LCI salmon to evaluate stock composition.

Bucher asked what the likelihood was for SB-40 being passed into law. Hilsinger did not think it would pass in its present form. Besides believing the bill was too vague, he predicted that rural communities would object to the bill's reducing their municipality's revenue from the raw fish tax (which they use to fund schools, etc.) in order to fund the bill's implementation. Bucher predicted the legislature would balk at the bill once they saw the fiscal note attached to it. Hilsinger thought it would be a mistake to go the legislature with a big budget list because it would look to small communities like the Department was trying to grab their funding.

Hilsinger sparked a discussion of John White's (Chairman, BOF) recent push for the state to articulate a "sustainable salmon fisheries' policy. Hilsinger suggested J. White's concerns were misplaced. Hilsinger didn't think there was any doubt about the sustainability of Alaska's salmon fisheries under their present management regime. If there is a threat to sustainable salmon fisheries, Hilsinger suggested it lay with habitat degradation and not improper management of commercial fisheries. Hilsinger believes a sustainable fisheries policy already exists, and that it just needs to be put together into an organized and concise plan.

The group also discussed House Bill 4 (HB-4). Hilsinger thought it odd that Rep. Halford supports a bill that effectively guts the ADF&G commissioner's authority to protect anadromous fish streams, yet he proposed SB 40. The group consensus was that habitat protection was the key to sustainable salmon fisheries (which HB 4 threatens), not rewriting policies for the management of the resource (which SB-40 proposes).

Kachemak Bay Mariculture

Discussion of this topic was superseded by DNR's recent announcement that no areas in Kachemak Bay would open to mariculture permit applications in 1997. However, some general issues relating to mariculture in Kachemak Bay were discussed. Bucher expressed his concern that there appeared to be very little oversight of this developing industry. Potential impacts mariculture may have on native vertebrate and invertebrate stocks has not been investigated despite continued growth of the industry. There appears to be some confusion as to who is ultimately responsible for evaluating many of these concerns. Habitat Division makes recommendations to DNR during the application and permitting processes, and CFMD is asked for input by Habitat Division. However, the issue of where the authority resides may allow this input to be ignored. Hope was expressed that NERR

designation may free up some federal funding to investigate mariculture impacts in Kachemak Bay, however, designation is still a year away, assuming it even happens. Following discussion of the nebulous permitting process, Brannian suggested that it should be modeled after the well-established process developed for hatcheries. Brady indicated he has been supporting that idea for some time now.

Administrative Issues

College Interns

Bechtol initiated a discussion regarding the use of volunteers and college interns for help on existing projects. Hilsinger indicated that college intern was a job class that could be hired like any other "non-perm". He also indicated that the Department had a policy requiring anyone participating in Department activities be 18 years or older. Some waivers are allowed on a case by case basis depending on the activities involved. Hilsinger also indicated that volunteers could not be used to reduce the amount of time paid technicians are employed. Each situation needs to be evaluated individually. A volunteer form should be completed and submitted for approval by Regional Staff (Hilsinger and Admin) BEFORE a volunteer is used. Bechtol also brought up the potential situation whereby high school students funded by Sea Grant would be available to assist with Department surveys. Hilsinger indicated that any arrangement where money would be involved would require a Cooperative Agreement between the state and cooperating partner. Such an agreement would take 1-2 months of lead time.

Hiring from Register

Hilsinger recounted the state's plans to do away with the Register system. Within a year or two, all positions will be advertised via various media (internet, job boards, 1-800 numbers, etc.) and any qualified individual will be able to apply. The hiring officer will then conduct interviews and hire from the pool of applications received. It will be important for the hiring officer to document their hiring procedure in case protests are filed.

Credit Cards

State credit cards will soon be issued on a trial basis to select area personnel who do the bulk of the purchasing.

HERRING TOPICS

Kamishak Forecast

Otis presented the 1997 herring forecast and harvest allocation for Kamishak Bay (Handout 14). Over 25,000 short tons of herring are expected to return in 1997. At an exploitation rate of 15% (13.5% for the Kamishak sac roe fishery and 1.5% for Kodiak's food/bait fishery), we expect to harvest a total of 3,800 tons of herring (3,420 to Kamishak, 380 to Kodiak). This forecast represents a 50% increase over the 1996 guideline. Two main factors caused this appreciable increase. First, 1997's forecast is 5,000 tons higher than 1996's, and second, the exploitation rate was increased from 12.5% in 1996 to 15% in 1997.

Otis reported that post-fishery samples were collected for only the fourth time in the past 11 years and that he tried to use those age composition data to their best advantage in the Age Structured Assessment model (ASA). Late season age composition data are necessary to accurately represent the total run age composition which appears to shift from older to younger fish around May 1 in some years. Otis commented that it was important to try to build a longer time-series of total run age composition data. Regional staff indicated that late season sampling was funded for 1997 as long as the testfish program successfully harvested its allocation of fish this year.

Otis outlined the problematic nature of incorporating aerial survey indices of herring biomass into the ASA model. Bucher relayed that poor water visibility make it difficult to spot small herring schools and sporadic flying weather often creates lengthy gaps in survey coverage. Both these conditions create problems in estimating the total annual spawning biomass in Kamishak Bay. Although the ASA model relies heavily upon catch and total run age composition, it is important to have a good biomass estimate every few years to "anchor" the forecast. Otis indicated he would try to identify a method for standardizing aerial survey data so they would provide a more reliable index of abundance and could be employed in the model more consistently. Otis mentioned that he and Bucher intend to present a paper on that topic at the International Stock Assessment Models Conference in Anchorage in October 1997. Bechtol indicated he also intends to present a paper on whether age composition data collected during the Kodiak food/bait fishery could be used with the ASA model to predict pre-spawner cohort strength.

Kamishak Testfish

Hilsinger reviewed the history of the testfish program and how administrative procedures have led to the past two years difficulties catching the full allocation of testfish. He indicated we need to put in some kind of "performance clause" so we have the flexibility to reject the high bidder if they haven't proven their competence to catch fish. Another alternative would be if we had the flexibility to select any one of the top three bidders; that should assure our ability to select a competent boat and crew. Hilsinger also suggested he'd like to see a pre-payment clause were ADF&G would get the money up front and then the contractee could catch the fish at their convenience, whether it be before or after the fishery. Another problem is that the bids have to be reviewed by Juneau before we can award the contract. Bucher stated that this condition creates a timing problem; processors do not like to submit their bids until the fishery is close so they can have a good idea of fish quality. Such a scenario is not possible when bids have to be sent through Juneau for review. Hilsinger suggested we could let the post season sampling boat keep several tons of herring and try to sell it (we would sell it on our permit). That way we could test the fisherman's contention that they could get high quality roe in May. Bucher commented that he was already convinced that they could.

Brady said he would check on when we are obliged to publish the winning bid price. Bucher commented that the fisherman really look for that as an indication of what they will be paid for their fish.

Fixed vs. Dynamic Harvest Strategy

Otis reviewed the Kamishak stock assessment difficulties we face as a result of prevailing weather and water conditions in Kamishak Bay. He raised for discussion, the idea of setting a fixed harvest

guideline for Kamishak Bay. Bucher recounted an informal poll he took of several Kamishak herring fishers on this subject. Several years ago, many expressed interest saying that they would rather know they could count on a consistent fishery than run the risk having to endure another lengthy closure waiting for stocks to rebuild. Regional staff questioned how you would decide where the fixed guideline should be set. Fishermen would seek to have the fixed guideline set as high as possible, but we don't have enough reliable biomass data to "tune" things that finely. Most staff agreed that it would be better to continue taking a conservative approach and make the best use of the best available data we have to set a harvest guideline each year.

Personnel/Logistics

Brannian will not take over Brady's responsibilities until May 1 so James will come to Homer in mid-April to assist with the herring fishery. Bucher commented that he has always concluded it was beneficial to get on the grounds early because there are usually boats there ready to collect samples. Brady volunteered to find out if a FWP officer would be available to monitor the fishery. He suggested they could free up a bunk on the *PANDALUS* for a couple of nights to facilitate having someone around to check permits, etc.

Table 1. List of participants at the Lower Cook Inlet finfish staff meeting held in Homer on February 13 and 14, 1997.

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION			
Anchorage:		**Homer:**	
John Hilsinger	James Brady	Wes Bucher	Lee Hammarstrom
Linda Brannian	Steve Fried	Bill Bechtol	Nick Dudiak
Ellen Simpson	Brian Bue	Ted Otis	Trish McNeill
Tim Baker		Marnee Beverage	
SPORTFISH DIVISION			
Anchorage:		**Homer:**	
Kelly Hepler		Scott Meyer	Nicki Szarzi
		Tom Balland	

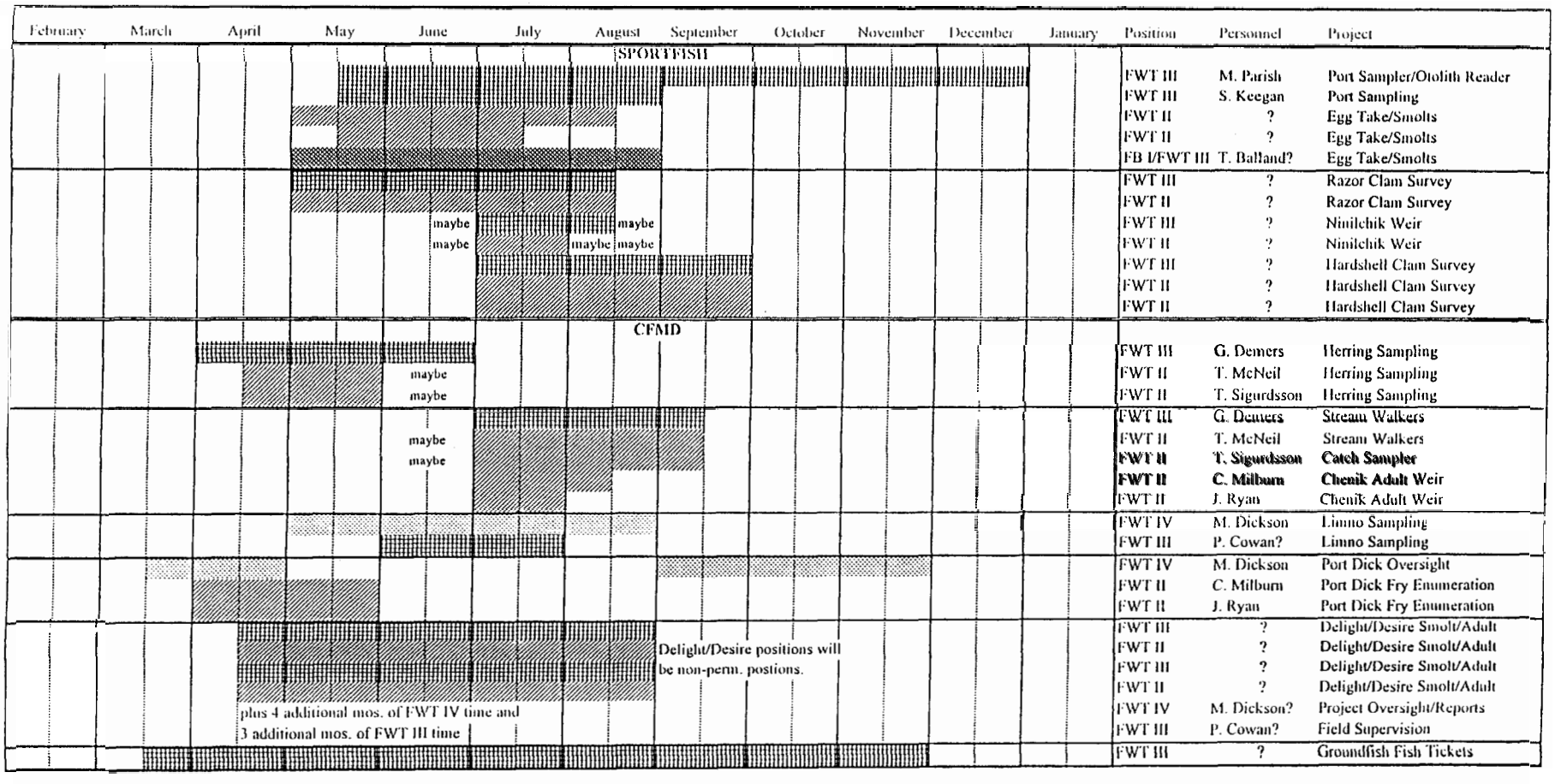
Table 2. Action Items assigned at the Lower Cook Inlet Finfish Staff meeting held in Homer on February 13 and 14, 1997.

ACTION ITEM NO.	ACTION ITEM DESCRIPTION
1	L. Hammarstrom will update W. Bucher's preliminary LCI Salmon Harvest table and send it, along with electronic copies of the LCI salmon forecasts for 1997, up to J. Brady and Karen Saunders so the regional office staff can disseminate it to the public.
2	W. Bucher will review Homer CFMD's vehicle needs. In doing so, he will coordinate with other Homer staff to determine how economize the overall fleet.
3	J. Brady will call Laird Jones to determine the status of Fred Elvsaas' request to John White to add the "Seldovia Subsistence Fishery" proposal to BOF agenda.
4	L. Brannian will contact Doug McBride to request that they CWT any coho destined for release in Kachemak Bay (Homer Spit).
5	J. Hilsinger will memo B. Clasby to reiterate CFMD staff feelings that it's important for the region to maintain some divisional fish culture and pathology expertise to advise ADF&G staff and review PNP activities, permits, etc. With retirements, and hatcheries going PNP, ADF&G has lost considerable expertise.
6	J. Brady will compile documents relative to McNeil River inter-divisional cooperative research efforts and send it (with a cover letter written by J. Westlund?) to the Commissioner's office to update him on our progress to date. In doing so, he will solicit the Commissioner's assistance in funding the video escapement project.
7	T. McNeill will determine what became of the Delight/Desire Lake sockeye genetic samples that were sent to Chris Kondzela at the Auke Bay Lab.
8	B. Bechtol will work with T. Otis and W. Bucher to review and possibly restructure the LCI salmon catch/escap. sampling program to emphasize escapement sampling.
9	T. Baker will work with L. Brannian and B. Bue to develop a strategy for converting the LCI salmon database from Rbase to MS Access. He will also investigate whether converting Homer's data entry from Lotus to Excel will affect those spreadsheet's compatibility with H. Yuen's existing data manipulation programs.
10	L. Hammarstrom will coordinate with T. Baker to facilitate Tim transferring down the Map Info database so Homer staff can begin using it.
11	J. Brady will contact Roxie Aragones regarding Test Fishing questions: process for awarding, problems w/ HQ review, can we not disclose winning bid amount until after fishery, and performance requirements.
12	J. Brady will contact FWP regarding enforcement coverage of Kamishak Fishery

Table 3. List of handouts disseminated at the Lower Cook Inlet finfish staff meeting held in Homer on February 13 and 14, 1997 (available from the author upon request).

Handout	Description	Author
1	Pre-audit information for Lower Cook Inlet salmon and herring projects	Brady
2	Preliminary 1997 LCI salmon harvest forecast	Bucher
3	New Chenik Lake stocking concept summary	Dudiak
4	Review of salmon enhancement and development projects in Lower Cook Inlet	Dudiak
5	Tributary Restoration and Development Project: Port Dick Creek, Lower Cook Inlet, Alaska	Dudiak
6	Lower Cook Inlet CFMD Development Section Staff Summary for 1996	Dudiak
7	Lower Cook Inlet CFMD Research Staff Summary for 1997	Bechtol
8	Lower Cook Inlet CFMD Development Section Status Report for 1996/1997	Dudiak
9	Lower Cook Inlet CFMD Development Section Status Report for Sportfish Enhancement Projects in 1997	Dudiak
10	Homer Spit Sportfish Enhancement Project	Dudiak
11	Lower Cook Inlet Area Fishery Observations 1977-1996	Dudiak
12	1996 Cook Inlet Hatchery Performance- Egg Takes and Releases	Simpson
13	Mikfik Creek Video Escapement Enumeration Project Summary	Otis
14	Summary of the Stock Status and Harvest Guideline Increase Forecasted for Kamishak Bay Herring in 1997	Otis

Table 4. Tentative schedules and personnel needs for FY97 SF and CFMD field projects in LCI.



LEGEND: FB I, FWT IV, FWT III, FWT II